

## A Process for Reflecting and Learning

### Helping Youth to Make Internally-Motivated Behavior Change:

Students are more likely to learn from their mistakes and make better choices in the future when they can do the following:

- 1) Acknowledge what they have done and its impact on them (i.e., their consequences).
- 2) Understand and acknowledge the effects of their action upon the target of their aggression.
- 3) Identify the positive intent of their behavior (i.e., the problem they were trying to solve or goal they were trying to achieve).
- 4) Identify alternative prosocial strategies to solve similar problems or achieve similar goals in the future.

### Guided Reflection Process

The Reflection Form utilizes four questions to help a student correct their thinking errors. Before completing the form, they will already have identified their consequence, thus becoming aware of the impact of their behavior on themselves (e.g., "I have to stay in at recess." "I got in-school suspension.").

- 1) The first question, **"What did you do?"** encourages children to take responsibility for their behavior. ("I hit Susan.").
- 2) The second question, **"What was wrong with what you did?"**—along with its subquestions, **"Who did it hurt?"** and **"How do you know it hurt them?"** helps students acknowledge the effects of their behavior on others, thus developing empathy ("I hurt Susan."). The goal is to help the student develop greater empathy for others and a stronger "social conscience." This is accomplished by encouraging the youth to think about the harm that was caused by his/her behavior—and the subsequent reasons we have rules of conduct in our society. In order to do that, focus on moving from "What happened to *me* as a result of my action." to "How did *my actions* hurt someone else?".
- 3) The third question, *What problem were you trying to solve or what was your goal?* "What problem..." helps them identify their positive intent—what was their underlying need. ("I was angry with her.")
- 4) The fourth question, **"What will you do in the future when you have a similar problem or goal?"** or **"How will you solve that problem or reach that goal next time without hurting anyone?"** teaches them more respectful and effective ways of solving a similar problem in the future ("I'll tell her I feel angry and the reason why."). Make sure the student has at least two options to try.

### In Conclusion:

- Ask the student if they need any kind of support to help them make a better choice in the future?
- If appropriate, thank the student for their thoughtfulness / honesty in completing the Reflection Form.

### Optional 5th Question to Provide an Opportunity for Student to Make Amends:

If it is evident that the aggressor is sincerely remorseful, there is an additional question you can ask:

- 5) Is there anything you would like to do to try to make amends—to make things right with (name) ?
- It is important not to infer any sort of expectation or pressure to make amends when asking the aggressor this question. An insincere act of remorse or apology teaches the aggressor to lie to placate adults and is disrespectful to the target.
  - If the student indicates they would like to do something to make amends, ask them what they would like to do. If they say they would like to apologize, teach them the steps of the 4-Part Apology below. They can use the *4-Part Apology Worksheet* to think things through.
  - If the student indicates they do *not* want to do anything to make amends, thank them again for their work and let it go.

**The BFS 4-Part Apology**

Everyone makes mistakes; it is part of growing up. Sometimes people say and do things that cause harm to others—either physically or emotionally. When that happens, an apology can be helpful for both the harmed person and the person who caused the harm. A *sincere* apology can help repair the harm done and mend relationships, but *only* if it is truly heartfelt. An *insincere* apology can cause further damage to the mistreated student and can have unintended negative consequences for the aggressor, such as teaching them that “I’m sorry” are the magic words to undo the harm they caused.

Below are the steps of the *4-Part Apology*. These steps can help you think through what you might want to say.

**1) Acknowledge:** *What did you do?*

**A**cknowledge what you did that was hurtful. Take full responsibility by acknowledging everything you did.

**2) Apologize:** *How do you feel about what you did?*

**A**pologize for what you did and the harm you caused. Express your regret.

**3) Amends:** *How can you make up for what you did?*

**A**sk if there is anything you can do to make **A**mends—to make things right.

**4) Commit:** *How can you assure the person you won’t repeat the behavior? What is your plan to handle it differently in the future?*

**C**ommit to not repeating the behavior. Describe how you will do things differently in the future. (You can share the alternative behaviors(s) you identified in question #4 of the *Reflection Form*.)